(b) if so, the nature of such complaints received during the last three years and in the current year, so far;

(c) whether any stern action has been taken to deal with these complaints to end the ongoing corruption in the export and import trade sector;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The nature of Complaints received against officials and lower level employees of STC during the last three years and in the current year broadly relate to:—

—Irregularities in commercial deals.

—Fraud and misappropriation of funds.

—Misuse of official vehicle.

—Irregular release of payments against bogus bills.

—Misuse of official position, powers manipulation and negligence.

—Tampering of official sanctions etc.

(c) to (e) Yes, Sir. To curb the tendency of corruption and malpractices in STC, the tenure of a senior appointee was not extended. In certain cases, persons *prima facie* found guilty have been put under suspension pending of final outcome of the investigations. In cases, where departmental inquiries have been completed; based on the findings and keeping in view the magnitude of irregularities committee, appropriate penalties such as withholding of increment, and reduction to lower stage in the time scale of pay have been imposed.

Export of Ayurvedic Drugs

1217. SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have considered the plea of the Ayurvedic drug industry for review of the order banning export of even those ayurvedic drugs including chayavanprash whose formulation does not contain extracts from any plants of the banned list; and

(b) the final decision of Government on their plea?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Earlier there were 53 species of plants in the banned list and exports of these specific plants, plant portions and their derivatives and extracts, obtained from the wild, were prohibited. After intensive discussions, the above list of 53 plants species has now been reduced to 29 species with effect from 13.4.98. Plants and plant portions and their derivatives and extracts made from these 29 species of plants, obtained from the wild, is prohibited for exports. However those obtained from cultivated/imported sources are freely allowed for exports subject to production of a Certificate of Cultivation and CITES (the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species) Permit for export, wherever applicable.

Ayurvedic drugs whose formulations do not contain extracts from any of the 29 specified plants in the banned list are freely allowed for exports.

Review of Marrakesh Treaty

1218. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether fresh negotiations are proposed to be undertaken with the World Trade Orgnisation for reviewing some of the provisions of the Marrakesh Treaty that have relevance to developing countries;

(b) whether, before aproaching the WTO, the view of State Governments will be sought in matters which fall within the constitutional jurisdiction of the States; and

(c) whether it is proposed to set up a committee of technologists, economists

and legal experts to advise the Government during its continuing negotiations with the WTO?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) In the Commerce Minister's address to the Geneva Ministerial Conference. India's concerns relating to the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements, and the imbalances and asymmetries in these Agreements, have been enumerated. India will continue to take these issues up vigorously as part of the process to be taken up by the General Council later this year to discuss and deliberate on issues raised by Member countries, with a view to making specific recommendations to the third session of the Ministerial Conference, scheduled in late 1999.

(b) and (c) Items 13 & 14 of list I of schedule 7 of the Constitution gives Govt. of India exclusive right to (a) participate in international conferences, associations and other bodies and to implement decisions made threat and (b) entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries and implementing such treaties, agreements and conventions. Article 73 of the Constitution extends the executive power of the Union to the exercise of such rights, authority and jurisdiction as are exercisable by virtue of any treaty or agreement. Article 253 indicates that Parliament has overriding powers to make any law for the whole or any part of the territory of India for implementing any treaty, agreement or convention with any other country or countries or decisions taken at any international conference, association or body. Thus, there is no constitutional requirement to consult the State Governments in such matters.

However, Govt. of India's decision process involves consultations with all concerned groups. There are already in existence consulative groups on major issues like. Environment, Trade in services, Trade in Goods and Trade Facilitation. These working groups comprise of representatives of the concerned administrative Ministry/ Departments, APEX Chambers of Commerce, noted academicians and technologists of repute. The Government also seeks the views and assistance of State Governments from time to time.

Price Stabalisation Fund for Rubber Procurement

1219. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state whether Government propose to create a price stablisation fund to facilitate the creation of a buffer stock of natural rubber and procurement operation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): No, Sir. However, STC was asked to procure 10,000 MTs of Natural Rubber in August, 1997 and again in May, '98 procurement of an additional quantity of 20,000 MTs has been ordered, to arrest the decline in rubber prices.

Fall in Prices of Raw Rubber/Latex

1220. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the steep fall in prices of raw rubber and latex;

(b) what steps Government had taken to ensure a remunerative price for rubber and latex;

(c) whether Government should ban the import of used tyres and polyurethane, completely; and

(d) whether Government will declare a remunerative price for natural rubber and direct the STC to purchase 50,000 tonnes of raw rubber at that price rate and to export the same?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In order to sustain the market for natural rubber in India.